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SUBJECT: THE 2010 SECURITY COUNCIL: SOME INITIAL THOUGHTS

Classified By: Ambassador Susan Rice for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. The votes and actions of incoming Security Council members Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Gabon, Lebanon and Nigeria will be more challenging than their predecessors and will require close management on some issues. On the key priority of non-proliferation, Brazil's efforts to develop its own nuclear power sector will play a role in its views on sanctions for Iran and DPRK. Brazil has already shown a willingness to oppose the P-5 by welcoming Ahmadinejad in Brasilia in November and abstaining on the latest IAEA resolution on Iran. Likewise, Lebanon may choose to sit on the sidelines on Middle East issues or succumb to pressure by the Arab group or NAM (chaired by Egypt) to serve as their surrogate. New members Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Gabon and Lebanon have capacity problems in New York and domestic constraints at home that could lead to abstentions or worse when faced with controversial issues. However, Brazil and Nigeria, as regional powerhouses gunning for permanent seats, will have to play roles that consolidate their support among the wider UN membership, as well as demonstrate that they can work effectively and constructively with the permanent five members. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Gabon, Lebanon and Nigeria have replaced Burkina Faso, Costa Rica, Croatia, Libya and Vietnam on the Security Council as of January 1, ¶2010. Our initial impression is that the new Security Council configuration will be somewhat more unpredictable in its approach to U.S. priorities than the present Council, and potentially less helpful to our efforts on non-proliferation and the Middle East.

BRAZIL AND BIH: LESS RELIABLE THAN COSTA RICA AND CROATIA

¶3. (C) Brazil will replace Costa Rica, which has been a reliable partner on key SC priorities, including non-proliferation, Afghanistan, Iraq, Sudan, and the Middle East. We do not expect Brazil to share our views on non-proliferation. As a country developing its own nuclear sector, Brazil has emphasized Iran's right, as a party to the Non-proliferation Treaty, to develop nuclear energy. Brazil showed it is willing to oppose the P5 by welcoming President Ahmadinejad in Brasilia in November 2009 and then days later abstaining on a P5 1 backed International Atomic Energy Association resolution calling for full cooperation from Iran with its international obligations. In New York, we would not expect Brazil to try to stop a future resolution that had P5 support, but we could see China or Russia try to hide behind Brazil's position in an effort to water down enforcement

language on a future resolution. We have seen differences on other Middle East issues as well, where Brazil has criticized U.S. and European efforts as biased. Brazil sees itself as a neutral party in the Middle East, willing to talk to all actors. However, it has consistently voted in favor of anti-Israel resolutions in the General Assembly, and voted in favor of the GA resolution calling for the Security Council to take up the report of the UN fact-finding mission on the Gaza conflict, headed by Richard Goldstone.

14. (C) At the same time, Brazil's actions will be shaped by its longer-term priority of obtaining a permanent seat on the Security Council. We can expect Brazil to try and compete with fellow Council member Mexico to assert a leading role in Latin American issues. For example, Brazil's Foreign Minister Amorim sought to address the Council in September 2009 during the Honduras crisis. When the Council agreed to meet with Amorim, he suggested in his statement that the meeting signified the Council's determination that the Honduras situation constituted a threat to international peace and security, something that the Council had not stated or intended when it decided to allow him to speak. Brazil will also be playing to the broader GA membership, highlighting the importance of social and economic development and other peacebuilding efforts in countries emerging from armed conflict. When faced with competing interests, we may see Brazil attempt to avoid taking a strong position on the Council, as it has consistently done in the General Assembly, abstaining on country-specific human rights resolutions, as well as the OIC resolution on the Defamation of Religions.

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15. (C) Another reliable partner on U.S. priorities, Croatia, will be replaced by Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). As an EU and NATO aspirant, we would expect the Bosnians to align themselves closely to European efforts on most Council issues. During a recent visit to New York, Foreign Minister Alkalaj told us as much, but emphasized that early bilateral consultations on key matters would be necessary to ensure that the Foreign Ministry has sufficient time to gain consensus among BiH's tri-presidency, which consists of Serb, Croat and Bosniak representatives. In the event the tri-presidency cannot reach a consensus, which will certainly be the case whenever the Council takes up Kosovo and BiH, the Bosnians will likely abstain. On issues where there is daylight between Russia and Western members, we could see Russia, which has been a strong and vocal supporter of Republika Srpska in Council debates, try to capitalize on this relationship to neutralize BiH's vote. Absent instructions from Sarajevo, the Permrep will look to mirror the EU and U.S. positions. At the same time, we do not see the Mission defying an instruction from Sarajevo to abstain. The Permrep is an ethnic Croat, the Deputy Permrep an ethnic Bosniak and the Security Council Coordinator/Designated 2nd Deputy is an ethnic Serb. Altogether, there will be about eight diplomats following Council and GA matters, so the mission will be stretched thin. We will need to engage early and often in New York and Sarajevo on most issues, especially where we expect our views will be in opposition to Russian ones.

LEBANON: LIMITED BY DOMESTIC CONSIDERATIONS

16. (C) Although technically Lebanon replaces Vietnam on the Council, in practice Lebanon is taking over the "Arab" seat--which rotates every two years between the Asian and African geographic regions--from Libya. We would expect the Arab group and the NAM (chaired by Egypt) to exert pressure on Lebanon to pursue their objectives in the Council. Like BiH, the Lebanese Mission will be constrained by limited staffing and resources in New York, as well as complicated domestic considerations, including a national unity government that includes Hezbollah. Lebanese Permrep Nawaf Salam has told us he would resort to an abstention on controversial Middle East

issues, including Iran, in order to avoid unsettling the delicate balance among competing domestic interests. Salam has pointed to a similar approach taken by Indonesia on some issues during its 2007-2008 Council tenure. Lebanon will also be faced with a decision on how to handle voting on the extension of the UNIFIL (UN Interim Force in Lebanon) mandate in August 2010. Article 27 of the UN Charter states that in decisions under Chapter VI, "a party to a dispute shall abstain from voting." Member states have not always recused themselves from voting on such issues, and it is not clear what Lebanon will do in this case, particularly with Hezbollah (which is named explicitly in SCR 1701) as part of the Lebanese unity government. Lebanon's handling of this question will not affect the Council outcome, but could have an effect on Lebanon's domestic politics.

17. (C) Outside of the Middle East, we would expect Lebanon to be more amenable to U.S. views than Vietnam, which often sided with China against the U.S. and Europeans on issues where China perceived the Council to be encroaching on national sovereignty. Like BiH, Lebanon has a small mission (9 diplomatic staff for the Council and GA), and will have limited capacity to follow all issues on the Council. Lebanon's new political coordinator Ibrahim Assaf appears to be moderate and practical and may serve as a useful alternative channel on difficult issues. Lebanon will assume its first presidency in May 2010.

GABON: A WILDCARD

18. (C) Gabon is a wildcard. The Gabon mission has been without a Permrep since January 2009, and the lack of direction in New York has been evident, with Gabon being absent on several important votes during the 64th GA. The incoming Permrep served briefly as Permrep in New York in the Fall of 2008 before being recalled to Libreville. Gabon will be the first of the new members to assume the Security Council presidency, in March 2010, during which we expect the Council to renew and possibly revise the UNAMA mandate. As a Council member, we expect Gabon to concentrate on issues that have been close to the African group, such as African

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peacekeeping, peacebuilding, and the protection of women and children in armed conflict. Gabon replaces Libya on the Council, and we would expect Gabon to be easier to work with than Libya, which often opposed the U.S. and actively worked against efforts to reach consensus on sanctions designations in Security Council committees on Sudan, Iran and DPRK. The French expect to influence significantly this delegation.

NIGERIA: ASPIRING FOR A PERMANENT SEAT, LACKING IN ORGANIZATION

19. (C) Like Brazil, Nigeria aspires to be a permanent member of the Council, and will be mindful of how its actions play to the wider GA membership. The Permrep served as chair of the UNGA Second Committee (economic issues) in 2008, and the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations ("C-34") in 2009, but it is unclear how these leadership skills will be transferred to the Council. Overall, we expect Nigeria to maintain the same focus as Burkina Faso, which supported U.S. efforts on non-proliferation, Iraq and Afghanistan. As the fourth largest contributor to peacekeeping operations, we expect Nigeria to take a strong interest in African peacekeeping missions, and will seek to ensure that peacekeeping capabilities are in line with mandates for Sudan, DRC and Somalia. Nigeria plans to make regional conflict prevention one of the hallmarks of its Council term. Nigeria has a larger mission in New York than Gabon, Lebanon and BiH, but has yet to complete the preparations which will be required to take on the expanded responsibilities of a Security Council member. The potential for a leadership vacuum in Abuja due to President Yar'Adua's failing health could also have impact on Nigeria's actions in the Council. Nigeria's first SC presidency is in July 2010.

THE TREND: LESS PREDICTABILITY AND, POSSIBLY, RELIABILITY

¶10. (C) Just two years ago, we usually found ourselves with a starting base of seven reliable votes on our priorities (U.S., U.K., France, Belgium, Italy, Croatia, Costa Rica). In 2009, Turkey replaced Italy, and in 2010 BiH will replace Croatia, while Brazil replaces Costa Rica. None of these new members actively oppose U.S. priorities, but we cannot rely on almost automatic support as with their recent predecessors. Brazil, as the largest and most influential new member, will likely prove the most challenging. Many of their default positions often hew closely to the NAM (where they retain an observer seat), but L'Aquila and Copenhagen suggest a broader more global view, tempered further by Brasilia's interest in a permanent seat on the Security Council. We would, however, expect Gabon and Lebanon to be more amenable than Vietnam and Libya to work with us through the Security Council's sanctions committees. We will also need to be cognizant of the capacity problems and domestic constraints of BiH, Lebanon and Gabon and ensure that we weigh in early to lock-in their support for our priorities.
RICE